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REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

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REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE

COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Ocho Rios, Jamaica

28-29 April 1997

1. The meeting took place in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, upon invitation by and with the support of the National Science and Technology Commission. It was held in conjunction with three substantive workshops of the Commission, on Information Technology (Editorial Board Meeting), STIP Reviews and a "Common Vision for the Future of Science and Technology for Development".

Opening

2. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the CSTD, who expressed great appreciation and thanks to the Jamaican Government and the National Science and Technology Commission. He referred to the outputs achieved by the CSTD in spite of the considerable time taken up by financial matters and sometimes pressing situations. The specific working style of the CSTD had helped in getting things ready, while the secretariat was busy preparing the documents for the third session.

Review of developments since the last Bureau meeting in Mumbai, India

3. Since the last Bureau meeting, particular progress had been achieved in preparing a large manuscript on the issue of ICT, which would be made available at the Commission's third session.

Minutes of the Bureau meeting in Mumbai, India, 20-21 January 1997

4. The minutes were adopted with the changes introduced by the Chairman to the earlier draft minutes.

Current financial situation of the Commission

5. The basis for the discussion was a table on the overall CSTD budget. Some of the planned expenditures appeared to be over-estimates, given the fact that the series of CSTD meetings in Jamaica involved less cost than anticipated due to an overlap of participation of Commission members in several meetings and a few late cancellations. This provided for more flexibility for other remaining expenditures. The secretariat reminded the Bureau that the Netherlands' Agreement with UNCTAD stipulated that its funds be subject to United Nations financial rules and regulations. If the CSTD did not wish to conform to the United Nations financial rules and regulations, then it would be obliged to channel such funds through an institution other than the United Nations. The Chairman explained changes in specific budgetary items as required (e.g. allocating more funds for the ITC activity). There would be funds left over for use by the next Bureau, both regular budget and extrabudgetary funds.

Report on the temporary Ad Hoc Commission on Finance

6. The Chairman noted that he had not been able to dedicate as much work to this activity as he would have liked. However, he had received valuable written advice from Dr. Jim Mullin from Ottawa on potential funding sources for S&T activities. On this basis, the Ad Hoc Commission on Finance would meet on the fringe of the session. The Bureau would advise the next Bureau to establish immediately after the session a small group on finance under the Chairmanship of one of the Bureau members, and to formulate shortly after the session a preliminary work programme on the basis of which extra-budgetary funds could be solicited.

The future of the CSTD

7. The Vice-Chairman of ECOSOC had invited the CSTD Chairman to give his views on the role and future of the CSTD. The Chairman has provided a detailed reply, which he shared with the Bureau members, along with substantive documents produced by the CSTD over the past four years. This reply would also be shared with the Commission members.

8. Reference was made to the ECOSOC elections of future States members of the CSTD on 1 and 2 May. Questions arose as to the exact procedure of ECOSOC in relation to the elections.

IT Working Group

9. The editorial meeting for the large ITC publication, at which the draft version of over 200 pages had been ready for discussion, had taken place on 25-26 April, and the Bureau took note of its conclusions with great satisfaction concerning the enormous amount of work achieved and the open atmosphere in which the manuscript, had been discussed. The editors would incorporate changes proposed into the manuscript, which would be made available to the Commission at the session. Written comments and suggestions from the Commissioners could be received by end May.

10. The Bureau agreed to invite two ICT experts to the third session of the CSTD to introduce the subject to the Commission before its discussion on the short report and its recommendations.

11. The Bureau agreed that making this publication (and other CSTD publications) available to developing countries at a low price would be a priority when negotiating with potential publishers.

12. Regarding the "ownership" over the ICT publication, the role of the Commission should be clearly explained, together with the Commissioners' contribution, as an expression of the CSTD working style. The editors could be identified by name.

13. The effectiveness of the Commission's work should be enhanced by furthering the use of the large report beyond its mere publication. As a follow-up, not only could the national task forces recommended in the small report use it, but regional workshops using the publication could be envisaged. Funds would have to be raised by the Financial Committee for that, which funds, once available, could also be used to provide a small subsidy for the task forces as seed money to break initial financial bottlenecks. This could be done in cooperation with institutions such as the International Institute for Communication and Development in the Netherlands.

14. The Chairman referred to the global conference "Global Knowledge 97", to be held in Toronto, 23-25 June. The CSTD was an "associate sponsor" and as such was entitled to make a contribution, as well as to nominate qualified individuals from developing countries for participation. He suggested that CSTD members who had actively participated in the ICT working group should attend. Ms. Ranga had already received an invitation in her personal capacity. The secretariat had also been contacted by the organizers. There was an understanding that CSTD participation could add to the conference by providing a critical assessment of issues related to IT and development. The small report would be made available to participants of the conference on the World Wide Web, as well as in written form. The Chairman was asked to ensure that the CSTD and its working style would get a clear profile at the conference.

STIP

15. The Chairman summarized the results of the special session on STIP that had taken place on 27 April. This session had discussed the secretariat note, the role of the Commission in STIP reviews, and the Colombia report.

16. There had been a feeling that the secretariat note was focusing too narrowly on the creation of an enabling environment for enterprises, whereas innovation was a much broader issue involving, for example, not only other fields of activity in society like education, social services, and government, but the informal sector as well.

17. Moreover, the note reflected insufficiently the involvement of the Commission. The Bureau drew attention to the Bucharest meeting conclusion, that in the orientation missions in which the reviews were designed, one CSTD member would take part, and in the main missions two members, who would also take part in the last round-up mission.

18. The Bureau discussed to what extent the CSTD should stay involved in the STIP reviews. It was concluded that it should stay involved for another four years, at the end of which the CSTD should review its involvement. Meanwhile, a small operational working group of the CSTD for the STIP reviews should exist, which could guide the CSTD in this matter together with the Bureau.

19. The status of the Colombia report was not clear. Was it a synthesis, a reviewer's report or a note by the secretariat? This required clarification. In principle, there could be a clear distinction between the internal report, the reviewer's report, a report on the final discussion with shareholders in Colombia, and possibly a reflection by somebody on all of this. Ultimately, it was up to Colombia to express its views on the note.

20. Moreover, it was noted that in addition to these STIP reviews, there were also rather comparable efforts by IDRC, and that the experience of the IDRC had been brought in at the special session on STIP in a very valuable way by Dr. Oldham. Further, it was noted that a general learning process on such reviews was useful and should be enhanced. It was therefore concluded that the CSTD should organize in the next inter-sessional period a workshop on the experience with these reviews and lessons to be drawn from it, with hosts/shareholders in the countries concerned as well as expert reviewers as participants.

21. In view of all the different activities in this area, there could be a "coordinating" or facilitating role for the CSTD. It was noted with approval that the link to "investment" chosen by Ethiopia for the STIP review was seen

by the secretariat as an exception.

22. Future candidates for STIP reviews appeared to be Costa Rica, the Republic of Tanzania, Belarus and Romania. A letter from Romania to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD was expected. The next Bureau meeting should take up this issue.

Gender Advisory Board

23. A meeting was planned to take place in Geneva on 9-10 May. An extensive report of the GAB to the Commission had been made available. The GAB had concentrated on the establishment of regional secretariats which would ultimately also take over the responsibilities of the secretariat in Toronto. Thus, secretariats in Jakarta and Montevideo were in the process of being established. In some countries, such as Jamaica, national activities were under way, but there was a question whether these could be related to the GAB. Now that the Commission on Women of the United Nations in New York had the official mandate for the follow-up to the Beijing Summit, this could facilitate its cooperation with the GAB. A meeting organized by the GAB and UNIFEM with gender (and S&T) focal points in UN organizations for two days early in March 1997 in New York had been valuable and instructive.

24. The Gender perspective should also be discussed in the context of the full agenda of issues of the CSTD, such as ICT, STIP and a Common Vision. The appropriate documents would be made available as soon as possible to the GAB by the secretariat.

Vision on the future of science & technology for development

25. The Chairman reiterated the importance of focusing on the future vision rather than on a commemoration of "Vienna". The Chairman also referred to the four themes and the possible scenario exercise agreed upon by the 20-21 December meeting in Geneva of the corresponding Working Group and endorsed by the Bureau in Mumbai. The discussion emphasized a continued need for addressing S&T for development in generic matters also and not forgetting elements such as discrepancies between rich and poor.

26. The first of the four substantive issues chosen, S&T in relation to development and generic reviews versus issues in S&T policy, would be addressed at the 30 April - 2 May "Vision" meeting. The first result would be made available to the third session of the CSTD in the form of a report by the secretariat. The meeting would be taped for future reference in a more comprehensive report in the context of the four meetings to address the chosen themes of the "Vision" exercise.

Coalition of resources

27. Under the guidance of Mr. Hillebrandt, member of the Commission, three studies were to be carried out addressing ICT in the areas of health, education and infrastructure. Two studies had already been contracted. Preliminary results would be made available to the third session of CSTD.

Publications

28. Three book publications had been issued over the past two years covering

the topics of gender, basic needs and integrated land management, with a fourth one on ICT well under way. It remained a priority to make these publications available cheaply in developing countries and to encourage their use by concerned persons, institutions and groups there. Different options were discussed, among them using and contracting publishers from the South or with sales networks in the South, possibly in cooperation with publishers for northern markets, where prices could be higher. It was also decided to organize a press conference on these publications and the work of the Commission in general during the third session, possibly at the end of the first day in combination with a reception.

New working style

29. The usefulness of the new working style was reiterated; the final formulation of it by the present Bureau was now available on paper and had been sent to all members as an annex of the letter to the Vice-Chairman of ECOSOC. There was no need any longer to talk about a new working style, as after four years of practice it was simply the working style of the Commission. It created an opportunity for the CSTD members from North and South to work together to exploit the expertise of the members for the inter-sessional work programme and for the United Nations to be seen as an internally and externally more interactive body as well, rather than a producer of papers.

30. Weaknesses were addressed. Thus, the role of the secretariat had not always been clear, but Bureau members wished it to play an active role in close cooperation with the members of the Commission. A further exchange of views on executive cooperation rules might be useful.

31. The Chairman's detailed letter in response to that of the member from Egypt, as referred to at the Bucharest meeting, was shared with and found the agreement of the Bureau.

Preparation of the third session

32. There would be a Bureau Meeting on 11 May at 2 p.m. at Hotel Suisse, Geneva. The Secretariat was invited to participate.

33. A list of substantive themes proposed by CSTD members and agencies was circulated. It seemed that this list was not complete. Participants also took note of the framework for a draft omnibus resolution and of a background paper on the mandate of the Commission, both prepared by the secretariat. There would be informal consultations on these papers, leading to suggestions at the last Bureau meeting.

Other matters

34. The Bureau agreed to the letter written by the Chairman to the Vice-Chairman of ECOSOC in response to his request on the future of the CSTD.

Closing

35. The meeting concluded on 29 April at 4 p.m. It briefly resumed to discuss the draft minutes on 1 May at 5:45 p.m.

ANNEX 1

Action to be taken at short notice by the secretariat or Chairman.

Agenda item 2

Large ICT report (draft manuscript) will be sent to Geneva and made available to members of the Commission there, together with the book Missing Links, and, if available, the books on basic needs and integrated land management. It should be carefully checked which members attend the meeting, in order that the other members get the books via their permanent missions in Geneva or by mail.

Agenda item 5

The Chairman will write a two-page summary of ideas regarding finance to discuss with countries of the "Core Group" on Finance, plus Belgium and tentatively Japan, on the fringe of the session.

Agenda item 7

The secretariat is to invite two persons, in consultation with Dr. Geoffrey Oldham, to address the CSTD on 12 May and to identify means of financial support for their travel from either the regular budget or funds left over from the extrabudgetary resources provided by the Netherlands.

The Chairman is to contact the International Institute for Communication in Development in the Netherlands over use of the ICT manuscript in activities in developing countries.

The Bureau will nominate participants for the Toronto ITC Conference in consultation with the co-chairman of the ITC Working Group.

The small ITC report will be put on the World Wide Web in consultation with the co-chairman of the ITC Working Group. The Chairman is to take action to further the profile of the CSTD at Toronto Conference.

Agenda item 8

The secretariat is to obtain the "Singapore paper" related to STIP (referred to by Dr. Arnoldo Ventura) and distribute it to the Bureau and the STIP group. The secretariat is to take note that the secretariat note on STIP reviews does not reflect accurately the conclusions of the Bucharest Bureau meeting.

Agenda item 9

The secretariat is to call Bonnie Kettel in order to find out which CSTD agenda items the GAB would like to address which documents she needs for the purpose and how the GAB will get them.

Agenda item 10

The secretariat is to arrange funding to tape the 20 April - 2 May "Vision" meeting. The bill will be sent by the Chairman.

The secretariat is to write up a note on the results of that meeting for the third session of CSTD.

Agenda item 11

If the two ICT studies drafts are available, they are to be handed out to the Commission members.

Agenda item 12

The secretariat is to contact UNDP, tentatively through Denis Beuu of SU/TCDC, on possibilities of promoting CSTD publications in developing countries.

The secretariat is to organize a press conference during the third session, tentatively on 12 May, at 5-6 p.m.. On this occasion, CSTD publications should be made available. The press conference is intended to be followed by a reception sponsored by the Netherlands mission, to which all CSTD members and the journalists should be invited.

The secretariat is to negotiate with IDRC to make sufficient copies of all publications available for the above purposes and to give them to the Commission members.

Agenda item 14

The secretariat is to take part in the Bureau meeting on 11 May at 2:00 p.m.

The list of substantive themes proposed is to be made complete.

The omnibus draft resolution is to be worked upon on the basis of the Chairman's indications to be sent on 6 May.

ANNEX II

List of participants

Professor George Waardenburg (Chairman)
Professor Messanvi Gbeassor
Dr. Marina Ranga
Dr. Arnoldo Ventura

UNCTAD secretariat

Mr. Dieter Koenig